

THE HERALD'S HARP.



FROM THE SOUTHERN INTELLIGENCER.

Great God! where'er mine eyes may rove,
I view thy wisdom and thy love:
Thy power and goodness all divine,
Surround this sinful heart of mine.

Nature with all her magic charms,
My thoughts with grateful fervor warm:
Points me to realms of bliss above,
Where reigns the God of life and love.

In every flower that gems the plain,
In every wave that heaves the main,
In all that decks the gulfy scene,
Thy truth and love is ever seen.

Oh! how unworthy of that love,
Do all my words and actions prove!
How often do my footsteps stray
From wisdom's straight, but thorny way.

But if thine eyes unerring mark
Each wave that throes the feeble bark,
Lord! could I dare to meet thy view,
Or stand my condemnation due.

But thanks to Jesus' precious name,
The most unworthy has a claim;
The vilest, if their guilt they mourn,
Back to thy fold again may turn.

Oh! may thy goodness move my heart,
From thy commandments ne'er to part:
But journey through life's stormy way,
To wake in realms of endless day.

There toils and dangers shall for ever cease,
The soul shall shine in everlasting peace,
Misfortune never more shall cloud the breast,
For there the weary from their labors rest.

M. E. S.

PARENTS' DEPARTMENT.

FROM THE WATERVILLE INTELLIGENCER.

"Train up a child in the way he should go."

The importance of a right education of youth, has been often and strongly urged by both ethic and political writers; but it appears to make too little impression upon the general body of mankind. No parent but wishes his children to be respected and worthy members of the community. When they cling around his knees and divert him with their innocent prattle, he cannot be indifferent to their future welfare and prosperity; but while he labors assiduously to save them from want, and to provide for them the necessities of life, he too often neglects the more important duty of training the mind to principles of morality and religion, regulating the passions, and forming habits of sobriety and moderation. Youth is very properly called, the springtime of life and the morning of our days. The metaphor holds good in many respects. In the spring, we plant that fruit which we hope to reap in autumn, and unless we commence our labors in the morning, we shall spend the day without profit. And as the fairest morning may soon be enveloped in clouds, so the most flourishing blossoms of spring may be nipped by the frosts, so the most flattering prospects of youth are often disappointed, and he who commenced his career of life, with affluence and honor, is lost to his friends and to society ere he has numbered half his days.

In watching the openings of genius, and the growth of reason in the young and tender mind, we observe its docility with pleasure. But when we reflect that now is the time to plant the seeds of virtue, and to lay the foundation of the future man, the object is doubly interesting. Principles implanted at this tender age, continue to receive new strength with the addition of years, and soon become indelible. At the age when a young man is about leaving the paternal roof to make his entry into the busy world, he feels the importance of having a mind well disciplined. No longer under the guidance and protection of his natural guardian, he must now think and act for himself. A degree of responsibility rests upon him, of which he was before incapable. He finds himself connected with friends, whose independence and tranquility he must endeavor to protect and defend. His wants must be supplied by his own industry. His prosperity and happiness must be the fruit of his own exertions. And can any parent bestow a greater benefit on his child than to prepare him for this period of life? Can any amount of property so well secure his respectability and happiness, as habits, already acquired, of industry, frugality, and temperance? The paths of virtue and vice are both before him, and will the entreaties of all his friends and connexions influence his choice so surely as a sacred sense of religious and moral obligation? It is often said, that a parent knows not whether he is bringing up children to be the comfort and stay of his declining years, or to bring his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, but this observation has not its foundation in truth. Nine tenths of the crimes and outrages, which are daily committed by wicked men, are the result of a neglected education in their younger days. Let parents pay proper attention to this important subject, and train up their children in the way they should go, and they will have a fund of happiness in themselves which is beyond the reach of misfortune.

Philip Henry.—Every Lord's day evening, each of the children of this excellent man used to come to him, and repeat the following sentiments, the father solemnly adding his amen, and saying, "So say, and so do, and you are made for ever."

I take God the Father to be my chiefest good and highest end—I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour—I take God the Holy Ghost to be my sanctifier, teacher, guide and comforter—I take the word of God to be my rule in all my actions—I take the people of God to be my people in all conditions—I do likewise devote and dedicate unto the Lord my whole self, all I am, all I have, and all I can do. And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and for ever."

LADIES' DEPARTMENT.

A BALL.

The following Letter was written in answer to an invitation given by the Managers of a Ball in Kentucky, to a young Lady.

CAMPBELLVILLE, Dec. 24, 1816.

Gentlemen.—This evening I received a note from you, requesting my company at Col. K's, on Friday next, to participate in a ball to be held there on that day. I thank you gentlemen, for the attention paid to me; but pardon me, if you please, for a non-compliance with your request. My objections do not arise from any aversion I have to you, or any other person I apprehend will be there; but to the practice itself. I recollect that I am a probationer for eternity, and have to give an account for my conduct to the Judge of quick and dead; time is short, and ought to be employed to the best purpose of which we are capable; and although I think the practice of dancing

far more decent and less sinful than many other practices, yet I think it calculated to divert the mind from serious and important subjects, and inspire it with vanity and lightness, unbefitting mortal, rational, and accountable creatures. It is not calculated, in my humble opinion, either to inform the mind or give dignity to character. We ought only to pursue such a course as will give improvement to our minds, and tend to assimilate us to Him who is the source of all perfection, or such as promises benefit to society, and we can reflect upon in solitude with pleasure, maintaining a conscience void of offence. O may we all so conduct ourselves, that, when we come to appear before our omniscient Judge, we may be so happy as to receive the plaudit of "Well done, good and faithful servant."

C. C.

Advice to Females.—Brighter than polished silver, more valuable than Peruvian ore, more precious than the pearl of the sea, than the diamond in the bowels of the earth, or all the shining treasures of the mines of Potosi, is reputation to a woman. As the time that is past, is gone for ever, as the word that escapeth thy lips, returneth not again; so is the good name of a woman when it goeth from her. Art thou beautiful as the morning, art thou comely as the evening, do strangers speak thy praise, and thy acquaintance pour their encomiums on thee? yet thy way is a narrow path, from which, if thou strayest, thou wilt never more find it out; thy praises will be turned into revilings, and thy encomiums into keen reproach. Art thou placed on an eminence, among the daughters of women, dost thou sit at the head of the board, do crowds of admirers bow down before thee with reverence? yet thou sittest on a slender pinnacle, from which the sudden breath of indiscretion, or the strong blast of envy may cast thee down; so shall thy fall be that of the falling meteor, thou shalt be despised in the dust, and gazed on with high scorn. Wouldst thou preserve this jewel of a high price, let not the boaster, nor the professed betrayer, come near thine house. As the way of a man on the ridge of a house, so is the fame of a woman among a crowd of fools, but the coquette is light of heart, and danceth along, no wonder, therefore, she falleth. Yet avert not to despise temptation, for the pride loathes her good name, by the means she taketh to preserve it.

Matrimony.—No happiness on earth can be so great, nor any friendship so tender, as the state of matrimony affords; when two congenial souls are united, the mental and personal love can never be separated; the man all truth, the woman all tenderness; he possessed of a cheerful solidity, she of a rational gaiety, acknowledging his superior judgment, she complies with all his reasonable desires; whilst he, charmed with repeated instances of superior love, endeavors to suit his requests to her inclinations—his home is his heaven upon earth; and she is his good Genius, ever ready to receive him with open arms, and a heart dilated with joy. How happy must such mutual confidence make them.

Piety communicates a divine lustre to the female mind—wit and beauty, like the flower of the field, may flourish for a season; but let it be remembered, that, like the fragrant blossoms that bloom in the air, these gifts are frail and fading; age will nip the bloom of beauty; sickness and sorrow will stop the current of wit and humor; but in that gloomy time which is appointed for all, piety will support the drooping soul, like a refreshing dew upon the parched earth.

YOUTH'S DEPARTMENT.

THE INFANT PREACHER.

FROM THE JOURNAL OF A MINISTRY.

I give you an interesting conversation between one of my Sunday School children, between five and six years old, named —, and her grandfather, with whom she was on a visit. The old man was then in a declining state:

Child. "I think you are very ill, grandfather."

Grandfather. "Yes, my dear, I'm very ill."

Child. "Where do you expect to go when you die?"

Grandfather. "To Heaven I hope."

Child. "I hope you will; but if you do, you must leave off swearing and saying bad words; if you don't, you will go to a bad place, and there be tormented with wicked and miserable creatures; but if you go to heaven, you will be happy with God and Christ for ever. But you must pray, and keep on praying, and if you awake in the night you must pray. Grandfather, do you ever pray?"

This last question, put with all the honest simplicity of infancy, touched the old man's heart, and melted him into tears. Nothing could have been said more pointed and seasonable, and I have reason to believe that a lasting impression was made upon his mind. He was soon after confined to his bed, when I visited him and had the satisfaction of hearing the following lamentations from his lips:—"What a sinner I have been! What means I have sinned! What a vile creature I am!" He also manifested an unusual strictness from the world. "O," he said, "I have done with the world! the little time I may be spared shall be spent in mourning over my sins, and seeking an interest in the blessed Saviour!"

He died in peace; and who knows but, at the last great day, it will appear that this was a brand plucked out of the fire, through the instrumentality of a little child belonging to a Sunday School?

CONVERSION OF A RUSSIAN BOY AND HIS FATHER.

The following narrative, taken from the report of the School of Foreigners established in St. Petersburg, illustrates the advantages resulting from the daily reading and expounding of the Holy Scriptures in schools.

Among the many interesting children at the school, one youth takes the lead, both for learning and piety. He was received into the school in the year 1821, October 24th, aged eleven years. His parents were, at the time, in a good way of business; but always poor, owing to their extravagance—living without God in the world; and spending their Sundays at tea-gardens, parties of pleasure, or at the card table. When their son Nicholas Chokmann, was first admitted, he could only read a little German, and Russian; he had not long attended school, before an uncommon capacity for learning was observed in him. His progress in the three languages taught in the school, viz. German, Russian, and English, was astonishingly rapid; he soon reached the highest class in German and Russian; nor was it long before he attained the same in English. His progress in arithmetic seemed to keep pace with his others; for he very soon acquired the four common rules with their respective tables, which he learnt by heart; he was then taught the compounds, which he soon acquired; and he is now very expert in the Rule of three. He has attained a general knowledge of Geography. His attention has been directed within the last twelve months, to the three respective Grammars; in which he has, by his own personal application, acquired a very competent knowledge.

But while his mind was thus acquiring secular knowledge, the Saviour was preparing his mind for the reception of that superior knowledge, which maketh wise unto salvation and which cometh from above. His earnest and eager attention to the Holy Scriptures, which, agreeably to the rules of this Institution, are daily read and expounded, was observed with delight; while care was taken to impress on his mind, also on the minds of all the children, that the way to obtain truly useful knowledge was first to seek wisdom of God, and to point out to them the amazing in-

feriority of worldly wisdom contrasted with that from above. After seven months had elapsed, a great change was observed. He became more humble; for his superior acquisitions had greatly excited him above the rest of his school mates; and indeed some fear was entertained, that this very thirst for knowledge, otherwise so desirable in youth, might prove a snare to his soul. But that kind Providence who watches over our fallible creatures, dissipated my fears. He became, from day to day, more thoughtful, pensive, meek, and humble. I endeavored to find out the cause of his dejection, but could not succeed; bashfulness and diffidence seemed to close his lips; while the penitential tear would steal down his cheek, in opposition to all his endeavors to suppress it. I thought of an expedient (now generally adopted in the school) that would afford him an opportunity of unfolding the state of his mind: he was desired to choose a portion of Scripture, and to give his opinion on the same in writing. He appeared highly rejoiced at this delightful employment; and, from the whole tenor of his comments, it became very evident that the Lord had begun a good work in his heart. After a while, he was desired to learn his comments by heart, and to repeat them on Saturdays before the whole school: which he performed with ease. This practice is followed up by him and several more boys, to the present day.

So great a change in this interesting Youth could not remain long unobserved by his friends; and I soon afterwards heard indirectly, that Satan had set his engines to work, and that plans were forming for removing the boy from school before he went quite mad. But the blessed Saviour again graciously interposed. The consideration of his general acquirements prevented his removal. His father experienced, at this period, some losses in business and want of work. These troubles increased the dutiful, steady, mild, and affectionate behavior of the boy; and his determined resolution not to accompany his parents to the tea-garden on the Sabbath day, had such an effect on their minds, particularly on his father's, that he resolved to look into the book that had caused such a strange change in his son. I shall never forget with what delight I put Gossner's "Spiritual Life in Christ Jesus" into the hands of the lad, to read to his father in the evening after the business of the day was over. This delightful privilege was continued every evening, and the poor old man's mind gradually opened to the truths of the Gospel. At last the whole family, consisting of father, mother, three sons, and a German workman, assembled every evening around the family board, to hear the delightful news of salvation for sinners through Jesus Christ.

Hearing of the great change which had taken place in the family, and having often been solicited to visit them, and desirous to satisfy myself of the truth in regard to their meeting together in the evening for worship and reading the Scriptures, I proposed to go some evening to see them when not expected. Accordingly I went, and shall never forget the joyful sight. I came softly into an adjacent room unobserved by them: the boy was reading in an audible manner, while the whole group appeared to have their attention fixed on the subject before them: the aged father was supported by a pillow, while the tears were rolling down his furrowed cheek. He was very happy to see me, and thanked me much for the care which I had taken of his dear son, and for the religious principles, which he said I had instilled into him. I replied, that I had no hand in making his son a Christian; that it was the work of the Lord. He said that the Lord had greatly afflicted him, for he was now very ill; but that he had something better in store for him than worldly prosperity. He further said, that since he had seen the effects of religion on his son Nicholas, he had felt a great desire to hear the Word of God; and that now, he could not find any pleasure in his former friends, and that they had all forsaken the house now that he had become poor, sick, and—here he stopped short, and wept bitterly. Before I left the house, he begged me to come and see him frequently, which I promised I would. From that time I determined to visit them at least twice or three times a month, and continued my visits until his happy spirit took its flight to the regions of bliss above. His death happened about six months after my first visit. I had frequent conversations with this good old man, and have reasons to believe that he died a penitent believer in Christ. I was with him half an hour before he expired. He told me that he was just going to leave the world. I asked him whether the Saviour was precious to him. "O yes," he replied; "He is my all! He is every thing to me! He is my only hope? Yes he is my all!"

SAILORS' FRIEND.

STRIKING CONVERSION OF THE MATE OF A VESSEL.

Captain C—, with whom I sailed, returning one Sabbath from a meeting at the Mariners' Church in Philadelphia, threw down upon the transom two Tracts, one of which, he said, was for himself, and one for me. I put my hand on the one lying uppermost, and asked him if I should take that. He said, Yes; and I threw it aside till I should have an opportunity for reading it. Being ready for sea, we now put out for the island of Cuba. Before we had proceeded far, I took my Tract in hand, and found it to be Dr. Payson's Address to Seamen. As I cast my eye over its pages, the words, "Whither are you bound?" came home to my heart. I said to myself, where am I bound? The only reply I could make to my own inquiry was, Pursuing my present course, I am bound to perdition.

This awful apprehension resting on my mind, I promised God, that if he would return me to my family once more, I would steer a different course. But this did not satisfy me: the words, "Whither are you bound?" were sounding in my ears by night and by day. I now resorted to my Bible as my chart; but my heart was so hard that I could not steer by it. This led me to attempt to pray.

I at length returned to my family, and these words came immediately to my mind, "Attend to your promise which you made to God." It was not long before I took another voyage. We arrived at our port in safety, but on our return were thrown upon a ledge of rocks, where, in attempting to cut away the rigging, I severely wounded my arm. In this situation concern for my soul became my greatest concern. It appeared to me that hell would soon be my portion, for I supposed my day of grace was past. I was brought to consider how my dear Redeemer was wounded upon the cross. Oh, how my sins heaped upon me, as the blood gushed from my arm. I cried to my Saviour, as loud as I could, to have mercy on my soul. I thought nothing of the loss of the vessel. Could gold have delivered my soul from hell, I would have given a thousand worlds; but alas! all was in vain. I was constrained to bid my wife and children farewell, and through the loss of blood to recline my weary head. At this critical moment, I expressed the words,

"Here, Lord, I give myself away,"

"Tis all that I can do."

Soon all my distress was gone. I felt myself to be in the arms of Jesus, and there I found rest to my soul. About this time day-light appeared, and it was a new day to me. I was all the time in prayer, and when I got on shore I poured out my full soul to God. Then this world was quite under my feet. O! that was the time when I could tell to the world what a dear Saviour I had found. The real enjoyment I then felt I cannot express. I remained there for four days, three of them I was in a small hut, and had no opportunity to converse with either captain or crew, for I was three miles from them. All my comfort was in looking to Jesus, and praying that I might be kept from sin. I had a desire to be once more returned to my family; but was enabled to say, "Not my will, O

God, but thine be done." If I know my own heart, I have ever since delighted in prayer, and wish to serve my God and Redeemer, and to commit myself into his hands for time and for eternity. I feel an ardent desire for the salvation of my poor fellow Seamen.

W. S.

The respected clergyman through whom the above was communicated, states that the writer, at the time of the date of his letter, (June, 1825,) stood propounded for admission into the church under his pastoral charge, and gave good evidence of piety. Since the change in his religious character his wife also, and his mother, and a brother-in-law, for whose conversion he constantly and fervently prayed, have indulged a hope in Christ. Such are the effects of a single Tract presented to a Sea Captain at a Mariners' Church!—*Tract Mag.*

BENEFIT OF RELIGIOUS SEAMEN.

"I have," says a correspondent, "lately visited a captain's widow, who told me she was once in a foreign port, and early one Sabbath morning a captain of a neighboring vessel came on board while she was reading; he said, 'Poor creature, why do you sit reading there? why don't you go on shore and join those merry people in their dancing and singing party?' It will help to exhilarate and rouse your spirits; but she answered, 'I should think it a disgrace even on a week day, much more on a Sabbath.' 'Why,' says he to the captain, 'don't you send your wife on shore, and not suffer her to sit here reading her Bible?' She'll be melancholy.' 'I esteem it an honor,' said the captain, 'to have a companion that delights in searching the sacred Scriptures.' 'Well,' said the stranger, 'you seem to be all Methodists here. I have got a fellow on board that is always praying.' 'Well,' says the captain, 'does he do his duty?' 'Why, I must confess he does his duty; but as soon as he gets an opportunity, he is on his knees immediately.' The captain's wife then said, 'We have an awful character on board that never speaks a word without an oath; we will make an exchange with you; send us your Methodist praying sailor—he may be the means of saving all our souls, and of preserving us from shipwreck at sea—and you shall have our swearing sailor.' 'No,' says he, 'if he can do so much for you, he may be the means of saving us, for we stand more in need of being saved than you. I went part with him.'—*Mariners' Magazine.*

Bible Prayer Meetings.—It would seem, from appearance, for a few weeks past, that God is about blessing these important means of grace in a very special manner. Never before, since our acquaintance with the subject, have these meetings been so numerously attended by seamen or by landmen as they have been during a number of weeks, and we never discovered so much solemnity among the sailors, or greater spirit among the Bible friends who conduct the meetings. On Friday evening, it is believed that there were nearly 400 persons at the meeting on board the New Haven steam boat Hudson, Capt. Brooks, lying at the foot of Maiden-lane. The deck of this large boat was handsomely fitted up so as to form a neat and convenient room, completely sheltered by a large and crowded assembly from the night air; beside which the wharf was lined with spectators during the whole evening. It was probably the largest sailors' prayer meeting ever held in America; and Captain Brooks deserves the highest commendation for his exertions to accommodate, and for the neat arrangement of his vessel. The meeting was addressed by a number of friends, who seemed to have imbibed the spirit of the occasion—a number of extracts were read from late numbers of the Mariners' Magazine, and several anecdotes of an interesting nature were related. The throne of grace was addressed, with unusual fervency, by an English sea captain; and a venerable old commander, whose looks were white with age, addressed the seamen present with great feeling and evident effect. The whole exercises were unusually solemn.—*Mariners' Mag.* of the 17th ult.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MR. SAMUEL HARRIS.

Col. Samuel Harris, of Pittsylvania, Virginia, was converted and called to preach about the year 1758; on which he quit all his honors and lucrative offices, and applied himself to the work of an Evangelist. A train of seriousness followed him, and for a number of years, he was more blessed of God, than any man in the southern states. His preaching was not much fraught with the wisdom of man, but so full of simplicity, zeal, and the Holy Ghost, that judgment and eternity would seem to be present before him and his hearers. His heart was so full of burning love to the souls of men that his domestic concerns fell into derangement, while he was seeking to pluck them as brands out of the fire. Finding, at length, the absolute need of providing more grain for his family than his plantation had produced, he went to a man (whose name I do not retain) who owed him a sum of money, and addressed him thus.

Harris. Sir, I would be very glad if you would let me have a little money.

Man. Mr. Harris, I have no money by me, and therefore cannot oblige you.

H. I want the money to purchase wheat for my family; as you have raised a good crop of wheat, I will take that article of you, instead of the money, at a current price.

M. I have another use for my wheat and cannot let you have it.

H. What will you do?

M. I never intend to pay you until you sue me, and therefore you may begin your suit as soon as you please.

H. (To himself.) "Alas! what shall I do?—Shall I leave preaching for a vexatious law suit? Perhaps a thousand will perish in that time. I will not. Well, what will you do Harris?" This I will do; I will sue him at the court of heaven."

Having resolved what to do, the Colonel retired into the wood, and falling on his knees before the Lord, opened his mouth to this effect:—"Lord Jesus, thou hast redeemed my soul from hell and sin; and thou hast called me to preach faith and repentance to my fellow men; but while I am doing it, my family is like to suffer. Blessed Jesus, a man owes me and will not pay me unless I sue him. I am in a great strait, O Lord! teach me what to do."

In this address, the Colonel had such a nearness to God, that, to use his own words, Jesus said to him, "I will enter bondsman for the man—you may keep on preaching and omit the lawsuit—I will take care of you, and see that you have your pay." Mr. Harris felt well satisfied with his security, but thought it unjust to hold a man a debtor, when Jesus had assumed payment. He therefore wrote a receipt in full of all accounts which he had against the man, and during it in the woods, where Jesus entered him, he signed it with his own name. Going the next day by the man's house to attend a meeting, he called a little negro to the gate, gave him the receipt, and bid him give it to his master. On returning from the meeting, the man hailed him and said—

M. Mr. Harris, what did you mean by the receipt which you sent me by the boy?

H. I meant just as I wrote.

M. You know sir, I have never paid you.

H. Yes sir, I know it, I know moreover that you said you never would except I sued you. But sir, I sued you at the court of heaven, and Jesus entered bail for you, and I thought it would be unjust to hold you in debt when I got so good security, and therefore I sent you this receipt.

M. I insist upon it, it shall not close in this manner.

H. I am well satisfied—Jesus will not fail me.

Farwell.

A few days after this, the man loaded his wagon with wheat, and carried it to Mr. Harris.

A SINGULAR TRANCE.

About the time of the persecution in Scotland, Mr. Erskine was taken suddenly ill, and to all human appearance died. On her finger was a ring, which her relatives attempted to take off; but being so much swollen, it was found impracticable. According to the custom of the country, the sexton was called to perform the last offices, and went at night to the grave—dug up the coffin—broke it open—and began to cut the finger on which the ring was placed with a penknife. The blood flowed out; when the sexton exclaimed, "O it is painful!" upon which the sexton was alarmed, and fled with precipitation. She immediately arose, went home, and knocked at the door. Mr. Erskine says, "who is there?" she answers, "Open the door," when he replies, "if my wife had not been buried, I should believe that I hear her voice." The door was opened, she entered the house to his joy and astonishment.

After this remarkable occurrence, Mrs. Erskine lived several years, and bore Ebenezer Erskine's celebrated Scotch divine, author of a large volume of sermons. Mrs. Erskine, on account of the persecution, was obliged to flee to Bass, a small island near Strirling, where the above personage was born. She called her name Ebenezer, in token of her deliverance; which signifies, *hitherto hath the Lord helped me*. We may it be said, how wonderful and mysterious are the ways of Divine Providence.

MINISTERS' DEPARTMENT.

FROM THE CHRISTIAN INTELLIGENCER.

The Influence of the private Devotions of Ministers on their Preaching.

The existence and extension of Christianity in the world, depend, under its divine Author, chiefly on the preaching of ministers. By this remark, it is not meant that preaching possesses any such necessary efficacy in accomplishing this object that, like and other human exertions, it demands only the commencing blessing of God. Although, as a natural effect, it enlightens the minds of hearers, and is otherwise extensively adapted to do good, the special agency of the Holy Spirit is requisite in regard to entire success. This statement is made on the acknowledged principles of scripture, as well as on its express declarations. But whatever may be the primary influence by which the great end proposed in the dispensation of the word is realized, there is a secondary influence which is highly important, if not indispensable. That influence is a preacher's own private devotion accompanying his public ministrations—his own daily prayer in relation both to the nature and object of those ministrations. This it is conceived is necessary, not so to give a proper character to his preaching itself, as to enlighten his mind in the exercise, but to secure the higher co-operation of divine influence, and thus the great purpose of the ministry. It is hardly any other essential prerequisite of good preaching, such as general literature, biblical learning, knowledge of human nature, native eloquence, ingenuity, or correct taste. It is a prerequisite without which nothing else can be effectual, and which, as we shall see, is adapted to enlist every other auxiliary in the work. Prayer is not intended to be the cover of deficiency—the solace of the mind in negligence—an amends for superficial preaching. It does not substitute the performance of one duty for that of another, or excuse the omission of any. But it is alike the preparation, the connexion, and the crowning work of the whole.

We have read of some, and doubtless there have been others, who, in awful ignorance and presumption, undertook the ministry of reconciliation without ever looking to God for his assistance and blessing. The example of Mr. Scott (a true penitent) is said to be to all serious readers. Such a neglect struck a mortal blow to his mind, and it afterwards did him, with awful horror. Considering the solemn nature and fearful responsibility of this undertaking, it would seem as the curse of God would visibly alight on offenders in this description—as if so monstrous an anomaly as a prayerless minister would be identified with a form of evil not less signal than that which in elder time hurried Nahab and Abihu to a terrible end. We are willing to believe that so bare-faced an inconsistency is very rare, at least among us; but that there is comparative neglect of the duty adverted to, we have a reason to doubt. Unconverted persons in the ministry do not of course pray in the spirit, however, some of them may observe the form of private devotion. And even in regard to numbers who afford evidence of piety, it is to be supposed that they feel in a much less degree than they should the necessity of special prayer in secret for their public ministrations. The fact is too visible in the lifeless, heartless manner, with which those ministrations are performed. Any short of an exemplary strictness in this duty, which is goodly number of us hope are enabled to maintain, is deeply to be lamented. If any object demands special supplication, it is that which is involved in the appropriate labors of a preacher of righteousness.

In tracing the influence of the private devotion of a minister, on his public exhibition of the truth, we may consider it, first, as to the somewhat substantial object of his own personal enjoyment in the work. So far as the satisfaction derived from a pursuit is a stimulus to exertion, so far such satisfaction is worthy of regard; and no doubt the concern of preaching is indebted to a circumstance of this kind for a share of its efficiency. A person of worldly views in the ministry, as he would not feel its peculiar trials and would not need or desire it, supernatural power and satisfaction afforded to such a person by prayer, would arise, according to his turn of mind, from pecuniary profit; the congenial employment of his faculties; the flattering attention of his hearers; public acclamations and kindnesses of his friends; fame, satisfaction, or the prospect of permanent fame. Satisfaction of this nature is certainly all that he could expect to obtain. With a faithful minister, however, it is not an object. At least, whatever a fleet it may produce on him during the ardency of youth, or the calculations of inexperience, however it may be fully ensnared by such a temptation, at first, he will lengthen out over it the victory. These carnal considerations are soon dissipated. They are either not realized, or they are found and felt to be unsatisfactory and unworthy; and the eager and prolonged unsatiation of them to be utterly incompatible with the faith of Christ. The faithful minister needs support. Preaching, and the same is true of some other branches of the ministry, is a work of such peculiar trial, that, on an occasion of such mortal offence to hearers, as to require more than human aid. A true minister, who sinks without a different and a mightier support, needs a direct access to the Fountain of all consolation. The only real counterpoise of his trials are the approbation of his conscience, cheering divine manifestations towards him, the stable hope of heaven, and the fruits of his labors in many souls converted to God. These are indeed sufficient, and hence it is that, in unbecoming himself in prayer, and pouring into the divine ear the tale of his griefs, the cruel mockery and insult he has received from man, he is relieved and satisfied. Hence it is that, in exploring the protection of a power, and the teaching of a wisdom infinitely greater than his own, he is returned with a sweetened, composed spirit, yet with unyielding zeal, to deliver to sinners the awful messages with which he is charged. And hence it is, amid the numerous disgusts excited by preaching, "Jesus Christ and him crucified," he has, by the communion with God, and by catching a ray of the divine glory, found a lively compensation for the secret he felt, in the solemn impression made by the Spirit, he exhibited, and by the doctrine he delivered. The secret of a ministry sustained in its trials, and triumphant in its difficulties, lies in the humbling, heavenly work of the closet.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



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